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9/29/23 Friday

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Biden Latest of Five US Presidents to Face or Be Threatened With Impeachment

The US Constitution provides a series of checks and balances between the three branches of federal government: the judiciary, the executive, and the legislature. Lawmakers have the ability to charge and try officials for alleged crimes, including the US President, which has happened five times since the Constitution was adopted in 1787.

The US House of Representatives has opened an impeachment inquiry into US President Joe Biden, with the first hearing of witnesses being held on Thursday. The focus of the inquiry is Biden's relationship with his businessman son, Hunter Biden, and potential corrupt dealings between them.

Depending on what evidence the investigation yields, House lawmakers could decide to file charges against the president, which is referred to as impeachment for "high crimes and misdemeanors." The trial would then be held by the US Senate, which would require a two-thirds majority to convict him. Conviction might or might not require him to step down as president, depending on the charges and the sentencing.

However, Biden isn't the first president to face the possibility of impeachment: four others have also had inquiries opened into their affairs, although only three of them have actually resulted in charges being filed: US Presidents Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in 1998, and Donald Trump in 2019 and in 2021.

Johnson took office when US President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, just weeks before the end of the US Civil War, by a pro-Confederate conspirator. Tasked with overseeing the abolition of slavery, Reconstruction, and the reintegration in the Union of the 11 US states that had rebelled, Johnson quickly became the enemy of a left-wing faction of the Republican Party.

The Radical Republicans favored military occupation of the South and the complete social integration of formerly enslaved Black Americans and saw Johnson as sympathetic to the former slave-owning white aristocracy of the South, and accused him of stonewalling Reconstruction reforms. In 1868, they saw their chance to get rid of Johnson after he fired Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who supported Radical Republican policies, in violation of the Tenure of Office Act.

Eleven charges were filed against Johnson, accusing him of abuses of power. In the Senate trial that followed, Johnson avoided being convicted of any charge by a single vote, even though almost none of the lawmakers from the rebellious Southern states had been readmitted to Congress yet.

1974: Richard Nixon

More than a century later, US President Richard Nixon faced impeachment charges after a probe was opened in late 1973 as part of the Watergate Scandal. However, he resigned before the charges could be filed.

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The probe began after what US media dubbed the “Saturday Night Massacre.” Nixon attempted to force Attorney General Elliot Richardson to fire Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, who was investigating Nixon’s potential involvement in the 1972 break-in at the Democratic National Committee’s offices inside the Watergate Hotel. Richardson, seeing the firing as a political move, refused Nixon’s order and immediately resigned. Nixon then attempted to order Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus to fire Cox; Ruckelshaus also refused and immediately resigned. Nixon then ordered Solicitor General Robert Bork, the third-in-charge at the Justice Department, to fire Cox; Bork complied and removed Cox from office.

A few days later, the US House of Representatives launched an impeachment probe of Nixon, concerning not just the firings but also the Watergate break-in. For months, Nixon blocked the House’s access to key evidence, including tapes in which he was believed to have discussed the break-in, dubbed the “smoking gun,” eventually releasing edited tapes and redacted transcripts.

By June 1974, the House Judiciary Committee had approved three articles of impeachment and forwarded them to the full House for a vote:obstruction of justice, abuse of power, and contempt of Congress. After Nixon’s most loyal lawmakers made clear their intent to support impeachment, Nixon announced his resignation on August 9, before the House could vote to approve the impeachment articles.

US Vice President Gerald Ford served the remaining two years of Nixon’s presidency, which ended in January 1977. Just weeks after taking over for Nixon, Ford pardoned him for any crimes he might have committed while president.

1998: Bill Clinton

The House opened an impeachment probe into the 42nd US president in 1998 for similar reasons that Johnson faced charges: his opponents had long desired to remove him from office and a series of scandals provided the opportunity to do so.

In 1994, an Arkansas woman named Paula Jones had accused Clinton of sexual harassment several years earlier, and the case was fought out in various US courts before reaching the US Supreme Court and being settled afterward outside of court in 1998. The case’s connection to another scandal surrounding investments by the Whitewater Development Corporation, with which Clinton had been involved before his presidency, allowed investigators to expand their probe of Clinton. That probe included an investigation of White House intern Monica Lewinsky, who admitted in an affidavit in early 1998 that she had intimate relations with President Clinton. Clinton initially denied the accusations, but later admitted to several incidents.

House Republicans opened an impeachment probe of Clinton in October 1998, a month before the midterm elections, with expectations they would win big as a result of the scandal. However, when the Democrats unexpectedly won several House seats, threatening the GOP majority, the Republicans quickly moved to file impeachment articles against Clinton during the “lame duck” session between the election and the swearing-in of the new Congress in early January 1999.

The four counts against Clinton were: two counts of perjury, including against a grand jury and during the Jones case; one count of obstruction of justice; and one count of abuse of power.

The Senate trial was held from early January to early February, with Clinton being acquitted of all charges. However, he was later cited for contempt of court by a federal judge for refusing to testify in the Jones case, and fined $90,000.

2019: Donald Trump

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The first impeachment of US President Donald Trump came in late 2019, the result of a probe into alleged events earlier that year. Trump was charged with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, amid wider claims he attempted to solicit foreign interference in the coming 2020 US presidential election, in which it seemed all but certain he would face former US Vice President Joe Biden.

In 2016, then-Vice President Biden compelled the Ukrainian government to close its corruption investigation of Burisma, a gas company on the board of which sat Biden's son, Hunter Biden - an action the elder Biden later boasted about during a Council on Foreign Relations event.

In 2019, after Volodymyr Zelensky unexpectedly won the Ukrainian presidential elections and became head of state, Trump allegedly pressured Zelensky to reopen that probe and to announce the discovery of evidence Ukrainians had meddled in the 2016 presidential election on the side of the Democrats, threatening to withhold a shipment of weapons if Zelensky failed to comply.

The precise unfolding of events is still unclear, but according to testimony given in the impeachment probe opened in September 2019, Trump had attempted to withhold payment for a Congressionally-mandated weapons sale to Kiev in early August, but yielded after news of a whistleblower complaint about the affair reached US media.

The impeachment charges were filed in December 2019 by the Democratically-controlled House. However, Trump was acquitted by the GOP-controlled Senate in the early 2020 trial. One Republican, US Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT), voted against Trump for abuse of power, but not for obstruction of Congress.

2021: Donald Trump (again)

Trump is the only president to have been impeached twice. The second round of impeachment charges came in the final days of his presidency, following the insurrection by Trump's supporters on January 6, 2021, in Washington, DC. After attending a "Stop the Steal" rally at which Trump claimed he had lost the November 2020 presidential election due to fraud, thousands of Trump's supporters fought their way past US Capitol Policeand stormed the US Capitol Building, temporarily dispersing Congress and sacking the building.

At the time, lawmakers had convened to certify the results of the 2020 election, which said Joe Biden had won the presidency. The insurrectionists' goals included seizing the election results and also several members of Congress and US officials, including Trump's own vice president, Mike Pence, who had opposed his claims of fraud. Their efforts ultimately failed, and US police and National Guard soldiers cleared the national legislature several hours later.

Trump, who made several public comments during the hours-long episode, was charged with having allegedly incited the riot and for abuses of power. However, the trial was held in early February, several weeks after Trump had left office. While a majority of US Senators voted to convict Trump, the total fell short of the required two-thirds majority, and Trump was acquitted. Many Republican lawmakers said that while they disapproved of Trump's actions, they saw the trial as political in nature.

2023: Joe Biden

In many ways, the impeachment probe of Biden is an extension of the affair at the center of Trump's 2019 impeachment: alleged corruption by members of the Biden family, in particular between Joe Biden as a politician and Hunter Biden as an international businessman.

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Accusations have swirled for years that Joe Biden used his political office to benefit his son's business ventures, or that Hunter Biden had toutedhis father's name as a way to open doors in the business world. Joe Biden's 2017 admission of pressuring the Ukrainian government to fire Prosecutor General Vitkor Shokin, who had been investigating a company on the board of which Hunter Biden sat, Burisma Holdings, Ltd., is one such example.
For two years after Biden took office as US President, Democrats controlled both houses of Congress, but Republicans pledged to open a probe of the Bidens if they ever won a majority in the House - as they did in the November 2022 midterm elections. That probe was finally opened earlier this month, with the first hearings being held on Thursday.
As of yet, no charges have been filed as a result of the probe.

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Late Senator Feinstein Hailed as 'Trailblazer' After 31 Years in US Senate

Following the announcement of US Senator Dianne Feinstein's (D-CA) death on Friday, US political figures sounded off their praises. Feinstein's career began as a lawmaker on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in the 1970s and ended with her as one of the most powerful in the US Senate.
"Dianne Feinstein was one of the most amazing people who ever graced the Senate, who ever graced the country," US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said on Friday. "As the nation mourns this tremendous loss, we know how many lives she impacted and how many glass ceilings she shattered along the way."
US President Joe Biden, who once served alongside Feinstein in the US Senate, hailed her as "a pioneering American," a "true trailblazer" and a "cherished friend."
The elder lawmaker died on Friday at the age of 90, following the visible deterioration of her health over previous months. She was the oldest lawmaker in the Senate.
Feinstein had previously announced her intention to retire at the end of her term in early 2025, although she had long faced calls to resign from fellow Democrats and the majority of the Californians who she represented in the Senate.
Early Life
Feinstein was born Dianne Emiel Goldman on June 22, 1933, in San Francisco, California. Her Jewish grandparents had formally adopted Russian Orthodox Christianity in order to live in St. Petersburg, Russia, before the 1917 Russian Revolution, which abolished the Pale of Settlement rules that restricted Jews to living in the Russian Empire's westernmost reaches. They kept that formality when they emigrated to the United States and passed it on to Feinstein's parents, but throughout her life, Feinstein listed her religion as Judaism.
Feinstein graduated from Stanford University in 1955 with a Bachelor's in History and worked for a nonprofit for several years before being appointed to California's Women's Parole Board in 1960.
In 1956, she married her first of three husbands, Jack Berman, who worked in the San Francisco District Attorney's Office. They divorced three years later. In 1962, she married again,

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this time to neurosurgeon Bertram Feinstein, whose name she kept after he died of colon cancer in 1978. In 1980, she married Richard Blum, an investment banker, who died in 2002 of cancer.

She was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the city council, in 1969. She subsequently mounted several campaigns to be elected mayor, but lost both elections. In 1976, a left-wing group attempted to assassinate her with a bomb on her windowsill, but the explosive failed to detonate. In 1978, she was elected President of the Board of Supervisors, placing her in the number-two position beneath the mayor.

Months later, former city supervisor Dan White burst into City Hall and assassinated Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk out of revenge for having been denied the ability to return to office after resigning by Moscone, and for having been politically marginalized by the liberal mass politics of Moscone and Milk (the latter of whom was a gay Jewish man from the Castro district who had emerged as an adept political organizer). Feinstein was elevated to the mayor's office, becoming San Francisco's first woman mayor, and was re-elected in 1980.

Feinstein served two terms as mayor of the Golden Gate City, a very liberal place where her moderate Democratic politics riled feathers. She was criticized by the city's large LGBTQ community for failing to support key legislation in support of same-gender partnerships and support for HIV/AIDS sufferers, but won acclaim for restoring the city's historic cable car network and raising Frisco's skyline higher than ever before. She also cut her teeth in many of the key political issues that would become hallmarks of her career in Washington, such as gun control.

Congressional Career

In 1990, Feinstein ran for Governor of California on the Democratic ticket, but lost to Republican US Senator Pete Wilson, who resigned in 1991 to take the state executive office. Feinstein subsequently ran in a special election for the Senate seat Wilson had vacated. She won, and remained in the US Senate until her death 31 years later.

She would become one of the most powerful lawmakers in the US Senate, leading the Select Committee on Intelligence and the Rules Committee, and becoming the seniormost Democrat on the Judiciary Committee.

Feinstein championed gun control legislation, most importantly the 1994 Crime Bill which included the nation's first national assault weapons ban. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Feinstein became an increasingly vocal supporter of the US National Security State, supporting the US invasion of Iraq and the PATRIOT Act and several intelligence programs that spied on and collected the data of US citizens. She denounced leaks about such abuses, called NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden a "traitor" for revealing the National Security Agency's illegal domestic spying program, and called for the leaker behind the Cablegate files to be punished "severely." The leaker was ultimately revealed as then-US Army analyst Chelsea Manning.

Feinstein was also supportive of laws that limited Americans' free speech rights, including laws against flag desecration and in support of internet censorship, most notably the 2010 Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeits Act (COICA).

In an interesting twist and true rarity in US politics, Feinstein supported Taiwan's eventual reintegration into China. She also supported increased dialogue with China and cross-Pacific ties, going back to her time in San Francisco politics. Feinstein once joked that "in my last life maybe I was Chinese."

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Final Years

Feinstein's mental decline had become apparent by 2020, when she was nearly 87 years of age. Media reports indicated Democrats were aware of her decline and struggling with a response.

She was reported to have trouble remembering colleagues' names or recent events - troubles that the public slowly began to glimpse over the following years. In February 2023, she announced her retirement at the end of her term in 2025, but the following day she forgot about the announcement in comments to the press. That March, she contracted shingles, an illness caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox, which further debilitated her. In August, she yielded control over her estate to her daughter, but retained her Senate seat, despite facing extensive pressure from colleagues and constituents alike to retire.

The visibility of her decline came amid debates about Biden's age as he seeks reelection in 2024, leading to an increase in use of the term "gerontocracy" - which means "rule by elders" - to describe US politics.

When Feinstein passed away on Friday, she was one of the wealthiest US senators. As early as 2005, she was reported to have a net worth of between $43 million and $99 million by 2005, with many of her assets reportedly placed in blind trusts. After her husband Richard Blum's death in 2002, she also received money from his estate. Blum was reportedly a billionaire, but the two kept their finances separate, according to her biography.

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Feinstein's Legacy Likely 'Embarrassment' for 'Holding on Too Long' to Senate Seat

While US Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) became one of the most powerful lawmakers in Washington during her 31 years in office, her legacy will likely be the problems she caused by staying in office, even as her health unraveled, a commentator told Sputnik.

When Feinstein died at the age of 90 on Friday, she was the oldest and the longest-serving lawmaker in the US Senate. The California Democrat had become one of the most powerful lawmakers in Washington, rising to become head of the Select Committee on Intelligence, placing in her hands some of the most sensitive classified information known to the US state. Towards the end of her life, Feinstein was heavily criticized for refusing to retire, despite her clearly failing mental health.

Human rights attorney Dan Kovalik told Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits on Friday that despite her long tenure in the Senate, she would likely only be remembered for the controversies over her final years - or possibly for the chaos that filling her shoes could cause in the Democratic Party.

"I don't think she'll be remembered much at all, to be honest. I think a lot of us remember her as supporting a lot of neocon wars, much to our chagrin."

"I do think her releasing the torture report was something - I think that report will have a lasting legacy, I'm not sure she'll be associated with it. I think if anything, she'll be remembered is

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hanging on way too long, past the time that she could even contribute to the Senate. It became somewhat of an embarrassment for her."

He noted that Feinstein staying in office until her death allowed Democrats to keep their small majority in a few key Senate committees, which cannot be reassigned until the next election.

"These committee seats are very important, I mean that's where the real work of the Senate is done and that's where the real power is, so to have a loyalist in that position, even if they're semi-functioning - I understand what they were doing," Kovalik said. "Although, I guess votes were held up because she couldn't even show up to do her job, so it was a mixed bag in that sense. But it works out in the sense that now they'll have a fully functioning person to take her seat, which will be very helpful to the Democrats."

Now, California Governor Gavin Newsom (D) will have to appoint a successor to fill Feinstein's office until the next election in November 2024. The highly-coveted Senate seat, which Feinstein held for 31 years, is sought by a number of powerful Democrats in the Golden State, including US Reps. Adam Schiff and Katie Porter.

Newsom has already said he wants to appoint a woman of color to Feinstein's seat, but Kovalik responded to the suggestion that perhaps Newsom might appoint himself to the position and allow a woman of color to become lieutenant governor after Eleni Kounalakis rises to become governor. The office could then serve as a launching pad for a presidential run by Newsom in 2028.

"I can see the appeal, though it may look so unseemly and so piggish to give himself a Senate seat and then run for president at the same time - I don't know, that's a double-bank shot that people may not appreciate,' Kovalik said. "But hey, crazier things have happened."

"He's in a bind: how do you choose between two people who are running for the Senate? I mean that doesn't seem very democratic, either, unless you pick the person with the highest polling numbers," he said, referring to Schiff and Porter. "I mean, that's at least the justification for what he would do. But you're right, he's in a bit of a pickle. He's the kingmaker, but it's not the most enviable position."

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US Has Funds To Continue Providing Kiev Aid For Coming Weeks: Kirby on Potential Shutdown

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council Coordinator John Kirby said on Friday commenting on a possible government shutdown that the United States has enough appropriated funds to keep providing assistance to Ukraine for the coming weeks.

"We have enough appropriated funds that have not been executed, have not been spend on aid to Ukraine, to get us through coming weeks ," Kirby said, adding that he cannot give the exact

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day when these resources would run out. "We do have some unspent funds that we can continue to work on past this weekend."
The US is preparing for the impact of a government shutdown, with its September 30 deadline just one day away. Congress will have just hours to reach a consensus on a dozen spending bills in order to avoid the shut down which will leave non-essential federal workers temporarily jobless.
But according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, active-duty military personnel and a large section of federal law enforcement officers will continue to be employed should the shutdown ensue. Essential services including hospital care, traffic management and power grid maintenance will also continue.
Republicans and Democrats have struggled to come to an agreement on military funding for Ukraine. Kiev has received, thus far, more than $76 billion from Washington since the beginning of Russia's special military operation.

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US House of Representatives Passes 45-Day Stopgap Funding Bill With No Aid for Ukraine

MOSCOW (Sputnik) - The Republican-controlled House of Representatives has passed a bill to extend government funding for 45 days that does not provide assistance to Ukraine.
The bill is a last minute agreement passed by the House in a desperate attempt to keep the government running. The continuing resolution (CR) bill needs to pass the Senate before 12:01 AM to avoid the shutdown, but it is expected to pass according to reports. Should it fail, the US federal government will shut down starting on October 1.
The short-term bill, presented by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, includes disaster relief funds, but does not include new aid for Ukraine. It's the first success for the House Speaker, whose own party tanked his previous bill on Friday in an embarrassing defeat, and prevented debates the week prior due to intraparty fighting.
Despite the House Speaker accusing Democrats of wanting to oppose the bill, 209 of the 335 votes in favor of the measure came from Democrats, while 126 Republicans joined them and 90 GOP members opposed the bill.
"When we all come together we're must stronger. I've watched what we've been able to achieve so far," said the House Speaker in a press conference after the bill was passed. McCarthy then toted several bills that were previously passed, including: the Parents Bill of Rights, a border security bill, and an independent energy bill, as well as cuts made by Congress in the debt ceiling deal (which may have laid the groundwork for the government shutdown).
McCarthy's address to reporters could be seen as a figurehead sharing his curriculum vitae in an attempt to keep a tight hold on his job, which his fellow Republicans had reportedly planned to oust him from.

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US Senate Approves 45-Day Funding Bill

On the eve of a government shutdown, 76 members of the Senate voted yes on a continuing resolution (CR) bill to keep the government running.

On Saturday, the US Senate cleared the 60-vote threshold needed to pass the short-term bill that will continue to fund the government for the next 45 days. That funding will include disaster relief funds, an extension of a federal flood insurance program and FAA reauthorization. The CR bill will not include assistance to Ukraine.

It was reported at around 8:33 PM EDT that the vote was on-going, but that Senate had cleared their vote threshold with 74 votes in the affirmative.

Earlier that day, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) succeeded in getting his CR bill passed by the House: 209 out of 335 Democrats voted in favor of the bill, while 126 Republicans joined them with 90 Republicans opposing the CR bill.

The Republican-controlled House shot McCarthy's bill down on Friday, causing an embarrassment and a headache for the House Speaker.

But McCarthy's long-overdue victory finally came on Saturday. And when he faced reporters that same day, he toted the concept of unity, listing off Congress' achievements during his time as House Speaker as if Congress' has recently been functioning efficiently.

At about 9:02 PM EDT, the Senate voted 88 to 9 to approved the CR bill, that will fund the government until November 17. The bill will now make its way to President Joe Biden's desk, where it is expected to be signed. All Democrats voted in the affirmative on the bill, despite it lacking funding for Ukraine.

"It's been a day full of twists and turns," said Chuck Schumer, the Senate Majority Leader. "The American people can breathe a sigh of relief: there will be no government shutdown."

"After trying to take our government hostage, MAGA Republicans won nothing," he added. "So one more time: it is good Speaker McCarthy finally heeded our message that bipartisanship was the only way. He could have made this decision weeks ago."

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President Biden Signs CR Bill, Allowing US Government to Avoid Shutdown

Late on Saturday, the US Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR) bill that will keep the government running for the next 45 days. The bill was then passed to the president for his signature.

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US President Joe Biden signed a short-term spending bill, approved by the Congress, which provides continued funding of government work for a period of 45 days until November 17, the White House said on Sunday.

"On Saturday, September 30, 2023, the President signed into law: H.R. 5860, which provides fiscal year appropriations to Federal agencies through November 17, 2023, for continuing projects of the Federal Government and extends several expiring authorities," the White House said.

The president signed the bill barely an hour before its deadline.

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US Reportedly Watching, Learning from Russian Performance in Ukraine Special Military Operation

An online report noted Ukraine's difficulties in penetrating Russian defensive lines, stressing the continued importance of training and coordination in a world of technologically advanced warfare.

According to the US government's own Congressional Research Service, US armed forces have been active throughout the world in one form or another for the vast majority of the country's young existence. Now, a new report documents the lessons the country is learning for its next war as Russian troops battle on in the Donbass.

The article, published in an online journal of defense news, describes the challenges faced by troops in an era of pervasive technology.

"Our communications are very specific, they're easily detected and therefore easily targeted," said Brigadier General David Gardner of the US Army's Joint Readiness Training Center, which trains Army troops through simulated warfare. "They're very complex to establish, to maintain."

The report stresses that "concealment" is a major concern, documenting the use of drone units in the Ukraine operation along with surveillance by satellites and other means. "The enemy can strike anywhere, anytime," said Gardner. Something as simple as a WiFi or Bluetooth signal can invite enemy fire.

"In the past, it was only scouts that would go into radio silence. Now we're seeing that across entire formations," said Gardner, noting that effective use of new technology requires knowing when not to use it, and how to use it cautiously.

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The report notes that modern surveillance capabilities, combined with the use of rockets and artillery, have led to increased casualties both in the Army's simulated war operations and for Ukrainian troops.

The Army is also training in psychological or "hybrid warfare," learning from Russia and Ukraine's use of social media throughout the special military operation. Reports in news outlet The Grayzone have documented the participation of US politicians and intelligence operatives in the so-called NAFO online troll operation against Russia.

In 2013 the US Congress passed legislation lifting a ban on spreading government-backed propaganda among domestic audiences, potentially allowing the US to wage psychological operations publicly and covertly in the age of Facebook and TikTok. Recent reporting documented the US military's efforts to shape discussion on Twitter.

Brigadier General Curtis Taylor of the Army's National Training Center in California noted Ukraine's objectives on the battlefield are "very, very hard."

"[Modern warfare] requires generations of practice," said Taylor. He concluded that current realities force effective coordination between all branches of the military.

The United States has spent more than $75 billion on funding for Ukraine's military efforts. The country's involvement so far remains mostly indirect; whether it will remain so will depend on America's response to an increasingly multipolar world.

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Fighting Words: We Don't Serve a 'Wannabe Dictator' Says Retiring US General Milley

Exiting Joint Chiefs chair General Mark Milley made the comments, which were widely interpreted as a swipe at former President Trump, on Friday at a transfer of power ceremony in Virginia.

"We don't take an oath to a country. We don't take an oath to a tribe. We don't take an oath to a religion. We don't take an oath to a king, or queen, or a tyrant or a dictator. And we don't take an oath to a wannabe dictator."

Those were the defiant words of US General Mark Milley on Friday. They've been broadly interpreted by national media as a thinly-veiled rebuke of Donald Trump in a prolonged exchange that has seen the former president suggest the execution of the US military's highest-ranking member.

Milley delivered the remarks at a ceremony at Fort Myer, Virginia, marking his retirement from a position he first took in 2018 at the behest of Trump himself. The comments were prompted by a post Trump made on his Truth Social platform last week suggesting the general had committed a "treasonous act" amounting to a capital offense in the waning days of his administration.

Trump's post read in part: "This guy [Milley] turned out to be a Woke train wreck who, if the Fake News reporting is correct, was actually dealing with China to give them a heads up on the thinking of the President of the United States. This is an act so egregious that, in times gone by, the punishment would have been DEATH!"

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Trump was referring to a phone call Milley reportedly made to Chinese counterparts after events at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 reportedly surprised and alarmed the world power. Milley claims he took the unprecedented action with the approval and cooperation of other military officials, but that didn't stop Republican Senator Rand Paul from criticizing the move.

The backchannel contact was first revealed in 2021 in an excerpt from Bob Woodward and Bob Costa's book "Peril" documenting the final days of Trump's presidency. According to the journalists, Milley had secretly called Chinese military officials once before in 2020 after receiving intelligence that China feared Trump would attack them in an "October surprise" before the election.

Reportedly concerned about the former president's mental state after January 6, Milley additionally forbade officers at the National Military Command Center from carrying out any instructions without going through the general first. Some Republicans have claimed such actions would represent a violation of the chain of command set forth in the US Constitution.

Milley also responded to Trump this week in an interview with US television where he claimed he would take "adequate safety precautions" to protect himself and his family after the remarks. "I wish those comments had not been made, but they were," said Milley. "We will take appropriate measures to ensure my safety and the safety of my family."

The 65-year-old general has been in a war of words with the ex-president since 2020 when he accompanied then-president Trump in a photo op during nationwide protests over the killing of George Floyd. He apologized shortly after for appearing in-uniform with Trump amidst concerns the move implied the military's political endorsement of the president, provoking Trump's ire.

Mass demonstrations against racism during the summer of that year sparked concerns Trump would employ violent force against protesters. Reports claimed federal police in unmarked vehicles arrested demonstrators in Portland that year.

"The [US military's] Joint Force… is the most lethal and capable military in the world," Milley said in his speech on Friday. "We are currently standing watch on freedom's frontier with a quarter of a million troops deployed in 150 countries."

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27 Years Later, Suspect Arrested in Murder of Rapper Tupac Shakur

Former gang leader Duane Davis, who had long bragged about being at the scene of the rapper's shooting, was charged Friday on one count of murder with a deadly weapon.

"27 years. For 27 years the family of Tupac Shakur have been waiting for justice," said police officer Jason Johansson at a Friday press conference in Las Vegas.

Today, the family of rapper Tupac Shakur---as well as millions of fans---stepped one foot closer to justice as former gang leader Duane Davis was indicted for his alleged involvement in the 1996 drive-by shooting.

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According to police, the killing was provoked after Shakur and Death Row Records CEO Marion "Suge" Knight's were involved in a brawl with Davis' nephew at a Las Vegas casino. Later that night, unknown assailants in a nearby car fired shots at the rapper while he was stopped at a red light, hitting him four times. He would die in the hospital days later at the age of 25.

Police claim Davis was the mastermind of the attack, calling him the "on-site commander" who ordered the hit.

Three others were in the car with Davis that night, though they've since died. Police said Davis was the last surviving participant in the shooting. He's also accused of procuring the weapons used in the crime.

Davis had long hinted at his involvement in the death of the "Changes" rapper, claiming in a 2018 documentary he was in the car the shots were fired from and knew the identity of the assassin. The former gang leader had also hinted at his involvement in his 2019 memoir "Compton Street Legend."

Police retrieved a copy of that book along with computers and electronic equipment after receiving a warrant to search Davis' home earlier this year. The evidence apparently provided investigators with the remaining information they needed to finally make an arrest in the case.

The young rapper, who came from a highly political family of Black Panthers members, was noted for often touching on themes of inequality. Many conspiracy theories emerged surrounding his killing, one of which claiming he had faked his death and followed his godmother Assata Shakur into exile in Cuba. Beyond the conspiracy theories, Nevada police were frequently criticized for not doing more to find and arrest his assailants.

Tupac's legacy includes having sold more than 75 million records worldwide, with many of them being sold posthumously. Six years ago, the murdered rapper was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, while earlier this year he was granted a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, becoming one of only 12 rappers to have received the honor.

At the ceremony for the award, filmmaker Allen Hughes spoke about the significance of the rapper to his legions of fans.

"Tupac Amaru Shakur has become a global symbol of rebellion, a symbol as visible and important as Malcolm X and Che Guevara. And an inspiration for activists today… Indeed, the entire world feels Tupac's message."

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Democracy for Me But Not Thee?

US President Joe Biden delivered a major speech on the subject of democracy on Thursday, his third on the subject during his presidency.

The argument, a touchstone for Biden, attacks Trump for his alleged disregard for American institutions and principles. He and other US liberals frequently point to the events of January 6, 2021: images of a wrecked US Capitol and ransacked congressional offices are cast as a highly visible symbol of a threat to one of the country's core values.

Now, polls show President Biden funding a war in Ukraine has been rejected by most voters, while highly popular policies like single-payer healthcare remain far out of reach. And yet again

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Americans are poised to enter a presidential election season with two major party candidates whose favorability ratings are underwater.
All of this begs the question: is Donald Trump the sole cause of democratic decline in America? Americans will judge that for themselves next fall, but if recent horserace polling is any indication Biden may have to deliver more than just rhetoric to convince voters his vision of democracy is worth preserving.

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Prosecutors Suggest Trump May Have Violated Federal Gun Law At Campaign Event

Special counsel Jack Smith questioned whether the former president violated the conditions of his release at a South Carolina gun shop Monday, forcing his campaign to offer a clarification.
The US president's son Hunter Biden is set to face federal weapons charges Tuesday at a courthouse in Delaware. For a brief moment this week it appeared 2024 contender Donald Trump might be joining him.
The controversy started Monday afternoon with a post on the X platform from Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung.
"President Trump purchases a @GLOCKInc in South Carolina!" posted Cheung, tagging the account of the US gun manufacturer. An accompanying video showed Trump examining a handgun bearing the former president's likeness.
The campaign deleted the tweet shortly after, clarifying, "President Trump did not purchase or take possession of the firearm. He simply indicated that he wanted one."
That didn't stop prosecutors from weighing in on the controversy, writing, "the defendant either purchased a gun in violation of the law and his conditions of release, or seeks to benefit from his supporters' mistaken belief that he did so."
Federal law prohibits people facing felony charges from obtaining new firearms; the former president is currently facing 91 felony charges.
In addition to pointing out the supposed violation of gun laws, prosecutors have also sought a gag order for Trump, noting his social media comments about retiring Joint Chiefs chair Mark Milley and other witnesses in his case.
"No other criminal defendant would be permitted to issue public statements insinuating that a known witness in his case should be executed; this defendant should not be, either," wrote the prosecutors.
Conservative gun rights advocates have questioned the validity of the kinds of restrictions faced by both Trump and President Biden's son. Expert Stephen Gutowski noted that a federal judge in Texas found the prohibitions to be unconstitutional. However, barring a similar ruling from the Supreme Court or a federal court of appeals, such restrictions currently remain in effect.

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US Congress Narrowly Avoids Government Shutdown Capping Off a Uniquely Dysfunctional Week

Irreconcilable differences nearly resulted in a federal stoppage as US legislators faced death, pestilence and criminal indictment.

US Senators Jacky Rosen (D) and Jon Ossoff (D) continue to recoverfrom recent COVID diagnoses, while Representative Chellie Pingree (D) copes with the virus for the second time this year. Senator Bob Menendez (D) is facing indictment for cartoonish levels of alleged corruption, while House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R) is battling fellow GOP members who oppose him.

To cap off the political drama, California Senator Dianne Feinstein, the longest-serving US senator from California, passed away this week.

It appeared proceedings would end with a government shutdown until an 11th-hour deal was struck late Saturday, but observers are still noting the US Congress's poor performance during the last week of September.

"You're incentivized, for your political survival, to burn the place down," said Representative David Schweikert of Arizona, lamenting that colleagues feel inclined to heighten the drama simply for fundraising purposes.

It was that kind of flamboyant partisanship that was perhaps the biggest driver of dysfunction this week as House Republicans kicked off impeachment hearings against President Joe Biden. Even many Republicans seemed suspicious of the effort. But more theatrics may be in store as the United States approaches next year's election in a country increasingly known for seemingly endless campaign seasons.

Biden believes the optics work in his favor. Republicans only narrowly won control of the House last year in a vote many had predicted would be a "red wave."

Since then, the House Freedom Caucus has often dominated the headlines, making life difficult for Speaker Kevin McCarthy. Recently the conservative clique has threatened to replace him with Representative Matt Gaetz, a politician best known by many for an alleged tryst with an underage minor (the charge was dropped due to lack of evidence).

If conservative lawmakers' spectacles boost Biden next year it wouldn't be the first time a Democratic president has been helped by an obstinate legislature. Harry Truman narrowly won reelection in 1948 after famously slamming a Republican-controlled House and Senate as a "do-nothing" Congress. Republicans would be shut out of unified legislative control until 1994, cementing Democratic dominance of US politics throughout the era of welfare Keynesianism.

With an emboldened labor movement on the upswing, the country could be on the verge of a similar moment and a less divided government. But before there can be unity, there must be something to unify around.

But if Biden wants to rebuild a durable progressive coalition he'll need to set his sights a bit higher: beyond his assurances that "nothing will fundamentally change" and toward a political vision that re-centers working class Americans.

If he doesn't, newer generations could insist on more radical solutions.

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What Killed The Dinosaurs? New Computer Model Answers Age-Old Question

A new analysis at Dartmouth harnessed the power of 128 processors working simultaneously. Millions of simulations later, two researchers think they have the best explanation yet for the scientific conundrum.

A new study this week shares the latest evidence in a long-running debate among scientists about what killed the dinosaurs.

Now, researchers suggest it was a case of gas.

That's the conclusion of Brenhin Keller and Alexander Cox, two geologists from Dartmouth College who developed a novel way to examine the question.

Most studies on the matter start by assuming the mass extinction 66 million years ago was caused by either an asteroid strike or a volcanic eruption. Keller and Cox wanted to consider the matter with as little human bias entering into the equation as possible. So they turned to computer modeling.

For their data input, they looked at cylindrical cores of sediment drilled from deep underneath the ocean. Those layers of earth, flecked with microorganisms called foraminifera, offer clues about ocean acidity over time and the amount of carbon and sulfur dioxide in the environment. Those two gasses are assumed to have played a role in the die-off that killed dinosaurs and 75% of all life on earth. But scientists debate whether they were released by an asteroid strike or a series of volcanic eruptions.

Keller and Cox simulated different scenarios, employing a Markov chain Monte Carlo statistical model to calculate probabilities given the evidence retrieved from the cores. They found that gas released from volcanoes was a sufficient explanation for the environmental changes that spelled doom for the dinos.

Meanwhile a near-simultaneous asteroid strike, leaving a massive crater in the Gulf of Mexico, had little effect.

Keller and Cox were aided in their modeling effort by the parallel use of dozens of computer processors. Carried out one after another, their simulations would've taken more than a year to conduct. Running them simultaneously allowed them to gather their data within days.

The research was published Thursday in the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

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Original Letter That Made Columbus a Historic Figure Goes on Sale

A 500-year-old copy of Christopher Columbus's letter announcing the discovery of America is set to be auctioned at Christie's. The missive made him a star throughout Europe.

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The year 1492 marked Christopher Columbus's fateful voyage across the Atlantic – an event that would forever change the world. Now, a letter boasting about his discovery is set to command up to $1.5 million at auction.

The letter, printed in Latin on an early printing press, is almost child-like in the excitement expressed within. Columbus gushes about the natural beauty of Caribbean islands, writing of "large, flowing rivers…mountains and peaks…full of trees of endless varieties, so high that they seem to touch the sky."

"The nightingale and other small birds of a thousand kinds were singing in the month of November when I was there…Hispaniola is a marvel," Columbus writes, using the name he devised for the island that's home to modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic (assumed by Columbus, of course, to be somewhere off the coast of Japan).

The letter, addressed to Spanish royal treasurer Luis de Santángel upon Columbus's return to Europe, was spread throughout the continent to publicize Spain's claim to the land. It was exchanged through diplomatic and mercantile channels, and helped make the self-taught explorer a household name.

It's in large part because of Columbus's own skill at self-promotion that he became so well-known, then and now.

Columbus also writes about the commodities he discovered that would jump start centuries of trade across the Atlantic – spices, cotton, cinnamon, and, of course, gold. A slightly darker tone emerges as Columbus relates his account of the inhabitants of the isles, describing them as simple and naive; "extraordinarily timid… like fools," Columbus writes.

"I… gave a thousand good and pretty things that I had to win their love, and to induce them to become Christians, and to love and serve their Highnesses and the whole Castilian nation… They firmly believed that I, with my ships and men, came from heaven, and with this idea I have been received everywhere, since they lost fear of me."

"I can give them [Spanish royalty]... as many slaves as they choose to send for, all heathens."

Later evidence has shown a less flattering side of Columbus, who's been accused of being a tyrant and exploiter, and his legacy sparks intense debate. Nevertheless, his importance as an historic figure cannot be denied.

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Under Fire: US Rep Bowman's Response to Fire Alarm Scandal Criticized

US Representative Jamaal Bowman pulled a fire alarm in a House office building Saturday amid a chaotic weekend session that saw Congress scrambling to pass a stopgap spending bill.

Last week saw partisan conflict in Washington reach an all-time high as Republicans initiated contentious impeachment hearings against US President Joe Biden.

Now some legislators are calling for felony charges against a fellow lawmaker, and Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) is feeling the heat.

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The controversy started Saturday morning as a Republican-controlled House released a temporary 45-day spending bill to avert a government shutdown. Democrats sought to stall a vote on the legislation, claiming they needed more time to read and interpret the bill.

Just after noon, a surveillance camera captures House Rep. Bowman rushing toward an exit in the Cannon office building – but not before pulling a fire alarm next to the door.

"I am embarrassed to admit that I activated the fire alarm, mistakenly thinking it would open the door," said Bowman in a statement Saturday evening, claiming he had been hurrying to the House floor to cast a vote. "I regret this and sincerely apologize for any confusion this caused."

The socialist representative rejected claims from some of his Republican peers that the triggering of the alarm was a tactic to stall a vote on their proposed legislation.

"I want to be very clear: this was not me, in any way, trying to delay any vote. It was the exact opposite — I was trying urgently to get to a vote." Bowman spoke with the Capitol Police and Sergeant at Arms shortly after the incident, telling reporters, "My hope is that no one will make more of this than what it was."

Some Republican lawmakers were unimpressed with the Bronx representative's explanation. "This is the United States Congress, not a New York City high school. To pull the fire alarm to disrupt proceedings when we are trying to draft legislation to AVERT A SHUTDOWN is pathetic…even for members of the socialist squad," wrote Republican Rep. Nicole Malliotakis from neighboring Staten Island on the X platform. She drafted a motion to expel Rep. Bowman from the House.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) promised to give Democratic Party leader Hakeem Jeffries, also from New York, a stern talking-to, saying the incident should not go without punishment. "When we found that an individual elected to Congress would pull a fire alarm, that's a new low," said McCarthy.

New York Rep. Elise Stefanik claimed Bowman was guilty of a felony (creating a false fire alarm is actually a misdemeanor in the US capital).

Fellow socialist Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D) of the east Bronx claimed Republican protestations over the incident amounted to partisan point-scoring in an interview with US media Sunday.

She claimed criticism of Rep. Bowman amidst Republicans' protection of fabulist GOP Representative George Santos is "absolutely humiliating to the Republican Caucus." The House spending bill ultimately passed, primarily with Democratic Party support, on a 335 to 91 vote.

Recent polling shows the US Congress has a 19% approval rating among Americans

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Social Media Congratulates Jimmy Carter on Reaching 99

The elder statesman is the oldest living president in American history and the third oldest former head of state in the world.

Travelers along highway 45 in the US state of Georgia are greeted by a unique tourist attraction: a 13-foot high peanut sporting a large, toothy grin. It was donated by the Indiana state

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Democratic Party in tribute to then-candidate Jimmy Carter during his 1976 presidential campaign. The statue is a relic of times gone by, but its inspiration continues to garner respect decades later.

Though Carter has been confined to home hospice care for seven months, the 99-year-old former head of state continues to show surprising longevity. Netizens sounded off on social media Sunday in a sign of the high regard enjoyed by the politician with a long record of philanthropic work.

“Dear Mr. President, One of my friends just turned 98 and another one just turned 101," wrote Barbara Streisand, who herself turned 81 in April, on the X platform. “Any way you look at it - you will live forever!! Sending you our best wishes.” The note was signed by Streisand and her husband, actor James Brolin.

Streisand’s followers joined the actress in sending their regards to the former president. “Happy 99th Birthday!!! May God continue to bless you with many more blessed birthday's [sic],” wrote one. “You're a good soul. I'm proud to be a fan! God bless you,” wrote another.

Admirers outside the United States chimed in as well, with one writing“I’m an Australian and I love #JimmyCarter99!!!”

“His presidency was a reflection of his own bedrock beliefs in human decency,” wrote user David Katzman. “Yet he was most effective as an elder-statesman, as the finest example of any ex-president.”

The official White House account also joined the celebration, posting a photo of a tribute to Carter in front of the presidential residence. “A special display at the White House in celebration of former President Jimmy Carter’s 99th birthday,” read the message. “Happy Birthday, President Carter!”

Carter’s grandson Jason Carter summed up his grandfather’s legacy thusly:

"I think his time in the private sector and the work that he did at the Carter Center, really spending his life among the most marginalized and poorest people in the world and believing in their power to change their own lives and in the power of human rights for them and democracy for them, will be the biggest part of his legacy."

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Hot Strike Summer in US May End With Historic Healthcare Walkout

A coalition of unions representing workers at Kaiser Permanente announced they failed to reach a deal with the company on Saturday, setting the stage for strike action.

More than 300,000 workers have gone on strike in the United States since January, marking one of the biggest years for organized labor in recent memory.

Now, the year could end with the biggest healthcare strike in the history of the country.

The Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, a group representing 75,000 staff across multiple states, announced they failed to reach a deal with the medical giant on Saturday, meaning as of 11:59 PM (local time) employees are working under an expired contract. If it’s not replaced by Wednesday, the coalition of unions is promising a walkout.

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“Workers are really being squeezed right now,” said Renee Saldana, a spokesperson for one of the eight constituent unions of the coalition. “They went through the worst global health crisis in a generation and then they come out and they’re worried about paying rent, they’re worried about losing their house, they’re worried about living in their cars.”
Major sticking points between the union and the company include pay and pension plans. The unions are also seeking protections against outsourced and subcontracted labor, which they say the company is using to drive down costs while paying temporary workers less.
But after months of significant inflation, workers’ salaries are perhaps at the top of the coalition’s list of demands. “I can’t afford to live where I work,” read signs held up at a Labor Day protest in Los Angeles last month.
A similar complaint was made recently by the union of public employees for the city which launched a major temporary strike this summer. Large strikes by the United Auto Workers and Hollywood writers have also grabbed headlines, but large unions are not the only ones making waves this year. More than 300 strikes have taken place in the United States in 2023 so far according to research from Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations.
If Wednesday’s temporary walkout doesn’t produce a contract, the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions is promising an even bigger strike in November, when a contract for Washington state healthcare workers expires.
Pharmacists, optometrists, X-ray technicians, nursing assistants and EMTs are among the workers represented by the coalition of unions which represents employees in hundreds of hospitals and offices throughout the country.

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Trump Attacks Letitia James Ahead of Trial in New York, Says She is Soros-Funded

NEW YORK CITY, October 2 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump attacked New York Attorney General Letitia James ahead of his civil fraud trial on Monday, saying that she is being funded by George Soros.
"Letitia James is a Soros-funded Democrat attorney general. George Soros provided funding for Letitia James’ campaign. James also received funding from George Soros’ daughter-in-law Jennifer Soros," Trump said in a statement.
James on multiple occasions made clear that "getting Trump" was the motivating force behind her campaign for attorney general, the former US president added.
Crime in New York, however, has skyrocketed under her, with murder up 55%, Trump said.
Trump is making an appearance on Monday in his civil fraud trial in New York. James said in August that Trump inflated the value of his assets by between $812 million and $2.2 billion over a decade to obtain loans to build a golf resort in Miami and hotels in Washington and Chicago.

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US More Worried About Ukraine's Corruption Than it Publicly Admits – Politico

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – A leaked US strategy document revealed that the Biden administration is far more worried about corruption in Ukraine than it publicly admits, Politico said on Monday.

A high-level corruption could undermine confidence of the Ukrainian public and foreign leaders in the government in Kiev, the report said.

The confidential version of the document, named “Integrated Country Strategy,” is about three times longer than its classified part and contains many additional details related to the US goals in Ukraine, the report noted. That includes privatizing Ukrainian banks, encouraging the military to adopt NATO norms, and supporting local schools in teaching the English language, it added.

The strategy also stresses that the Ukrainian government can not delay its anti-graft policies because the current situation could cause concern from allies in the West.

Politico supposed that the fact of the quiet release of the strategy, along with the toughest language in the confidential version, shows the White House’s concerns over the situation in Ukraine.

The Biden administration wants to press Ukraine to cut graft. However, excessive attention to this problem may strengthen the opposition of Washington to Kiev and could make European allies think once again about their own role in this process, according to the report.

One US official noted that the American and Ukrainian counterparts have “some honest conversations happening behind the scenes” over the issue. His colleague familiar with the topic of those discussions confirmed that Washington is talking to Kiev about potentially conditioning future economic aid on “reforms to tackle corruption and make Ukraine a more attractive place for private investment,” the report added.

However, these conditions are not related to the military support for Ukraine, this official added.

The strategy noted that US goals in Ukraine include providing military support and training to confront Russia. The classified version also revealed Washington’s readiness to help Kiev in reforming its national security apparatus, the report said.

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New York AG Letitia James Says 'No One Is Above The Law' Ahead of Trump's Trial

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) -New York Attorney General Letitia James said ahead of the court hearing with the presence of former President Donald Trump that no one is above the law.

"No matter how powerful you are, no matter how much money you think you may have. No one is above the law. And it is my responsibility and my duty and my job to enforce it. The law is both powerful and fragile... Justice will prevail," James told reporters on Monday Morning.

Hundreds of media representatives have gathered outside the courthouse, a Sputnik

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correspondent reported.
The local TV channels also showed Trump's car heading to court.
Last week, the NBC News broadcaster reported that Trump would attend first days of fraud trial against him in New York.
James stated last week that Trump inflated the value of his assets by between $812 million and $2.2 billion over a decade to obtain loans to build a golf resort in Miami and hotels in Washington and Chicago.

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US Defense Secretary Reiterates Ukraine Support After Stopgap Legislation - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin spoke with his Ukrainian counterpart on Sunday to reiterate US support for Ukraine after stopgap spending legislation to avert a federal government shutdown did not include funds for Ukraine, according to a release on Monday.
"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke by phone yesterday with Ukrainian Minister of Defence Rustem Umerov to reiterate U.S. support for Ukraine in the face of continued Russian aggression and discuss security assistance priorities," the release stated.
Congress approved the stopgap spending bill at the last minute before the Saturday deadline. While its passage narrowly averted the chaos of a government shutdown, the new legislation did not include additional funds for Ukraine despite bipartisan Senate support.
US President Biden said in a statement that American support for Ukraine should not be interrupted under any circumstances and called on Speaker Kevin McCarthy to secure House Republican support for Ukraine aid.

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SpaceX Partners with Jumia to Offer Starlink Broadband in Africa – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – Elon Musk's SpaceX has partnered with Jumia Technologies to expand its Starlink satellite broadband services in several African countries, Bloomberg reported on Monday.
Jumia will begin selling Starlink satellite kits in Nigeria in the coming weeks, according to Bloomberg's interview with the e-commerce company's chief commercial officer. Kenya is next in line. Jumia intends to eventually sell Starlink's products in the 11 African countries that it operates in.
Starlink's portable terminals connect to a network of thousands of low-earth orbit satellites in order to deliver broadband services.
This can potentially overcome the lack of infrastructure in unmapped or remote regions that has

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stymied previous broadband initiatives by major tech companies like Google and Facebook (a social network owned by Meta, banned in Russia as an extremist organization).

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IMF Says Private Finance in Climate Mitigation Should Increase to 80-90% by 2030

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The private sector in emerging markets and developing economies (EMDE) has to play a significant role in mitigating climate change and should increase its share of financing to up to 90% by 2030, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Monday.

"Our estimates suggest that the share of private finance must increase significantly. By 2030, private finance will have to cover about 80% of the climate mitigation investment needs in EMDEs," the IMF said in its Global Financial Stability Report.

With the exclusion of China, the share of financing may reach 90%, the report said.

The IMF said in the report that it has estimated that the private sector must cover most of the climate mitigation investment because public investment growth is projected to be limited.

Climate investment flows have been increasing globally in the EMDEs but remain limited, the report said.

"Despite a proliferation of supportive financial sector policies and climate commitments by financial institutions, a substantive shift in financing flows from high- to low-emissions assets, particularly in EMDEs, has still not materialized," the report added.

The IMF pointed out that achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 requires an annual increase of $5 trillion in financing in the next seven years.

"Climate mitigation investment needs in EMDEs are projected to increase to $2 trillion by 2030, which represents about 40 percent of global mitigation investment needs," the report said.

Governments have to implement a broad mix of policies to create an attractive environment for private capital, and policymakers are urged to take additional measures to unlock private climate finance in EMDEs, the report said.

"Structural policies, specifically those aimed at strengthening macroeconomic fundamentals, deepening financial markets, improving policy predictability, and fostering institutional and governance frameworks, are key to lowering the cost of capital, mobilizing domestic financial resources, and improving credit ratings in EMDEs. Strong climate policies and commitments can help send an important signal to investors," the report said.

The IMF recommended ensuring that the climate information architecture, including data, disclosures and alignment approaches, is strengthened, the report added

Such efforts would increase investor confidence in high-quality, reliable, and comparable data, according to the report.

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Governments Pausing Achieving Net Zero Emissions May Raise Public Debt by 50% - IMF

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Governments possibly pausing efforts to achieve net zero emissions could increase public debt by up to 50% in some countries, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Fiscal Affairs Department Deputy Director Ruud de Mooij said on Monday.

"We show the scenario where the governments pace extensively for the pause of achieving net zero emissions by mid-century with subsidies, with public utilities and so on. In that scenario, public debt rises by 45% to 50%," Mooij said.

Mooij made the comment while presenting the IMF's Fiscal Monitor and Global Financial Stability Report.

The IMF considers the scenario in which governments would pause achieving net zero emissions as fiscally unsustainable, he said.

Mooij warned governments not to place an excessive weight on the private sector because such an approach could lead to political opposition and lack of public support.

"The fiscal constraints can be relaxed significantly by a combination of policies. In that scenario, debt increases by between 10% and 15% instead of 45% to 50%," he said.

Mooij expressed confidence that finding the right mix of policies and the right vision of responsibilities between the governments and the private sector would allow to avoid problems.

Countries should "relax red lines" and implement right spending policies to support vulnerable populations and regions, Mooij said.

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Laphonza Butler Appointed to Complete Feinstein's California Senate Term - Governor

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - California Governor Gavin Newsom has announced the appointment of Laphonza Butler to complete the remainder of the Senate term of California Sen. Dianne Feinstein who died last Thursday, according to a release.

"An advocate for women and girls, a second-generation fighter for working people, and a trusted adviser to Vice President Harris, Laphonza Butler represents the best of California, and she'll represent us proudly in the United States Senate," Newsom said in the release on Sunday.

Butler will step down as the president of Emily's List, an organization dedicated to electing women. Prior to Emily's List, Butler ran political campaigns and led strategy efforts for numerous companies, organizations, and elected leaders — including for Vice President Kamala Harris and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She was a key leader of Harris' presidential campaign.

For more than a decade, Butler served as the president of the largest labor union in California, SEIU Local 2015, which represents more than 325,000 nursing home and home-care workers. She was president of SEIU United Long Term Care Workers (ULTCW) and the director of

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SEIU's property services division, responsible for the strategic direction of organizing on behalf of more than 250,000 janitors, security officers, window cleaners, and food service workers across the country. Butler also served as SEIU's international vice president and SEIU California State Council's president.

Butler was the former director of the board of governors of the Federal Reserve System's Los Angeles branch. In 2018, she was appointed to the University of California Board of Regents, serving until 2021. She has also been a board member for the National Children's Defense Fund, BLACK PAC, and the Bay Area Economic Council Institute.

Butler will be the second Black woman to serve as California's senator following Harris. She will also be the state's first openly LGBTQ+ senator.

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Sullivan in Call With Kurti Underscores US Readiness to Support KFOR - White House

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in a call with Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti underscored US readiness to ensure NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) remains properly equipped, the White House said in a readout.

"He [Sullivan] also expressed concern about Serbian military mobilizations near the Kosovo border. He noted recent decisions by NATO to bolster the NATO Kosovo Force's (KFOR) presence and activity, especially in northern Kosovo, and underscored the readiness of the United States to work with our Allies to ensure KFOR remained appropriately resourced to fulfill its mission," the release said on Friday. "Sullivan and Prime Minister Kurti discussed the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, which Mr. Sullivan underscored was the only long-term solution to ensuring stability throughout Kosovo."

The White House earlier announced that NATO will increase its presence near the Kosovo border with Serbia in response to recent tensions. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke to Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic about the need to de-escalate tensions with Kosovo, the State Department said on Friday.

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Trump Pledges to Address Homelessness if Elected Again

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said if re-elected he will use all resources available to relieve homelessness in California to restore public spaces for tax-paying and law-abiding citizens.

"As President I will use all available powers to take the homeless... off your streets so that law abiding citizens can once again enjoy the parks and public spaces for which they're paying a lot of money in tax," Trump said during the California Republican Party fall convention in Anaheim,

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CA on Friday.

California is recognized for having the largest homeless population in the US. The homelessness rate in the state stems from its large population, high city living costs, significant poverty, and lack of affordable housing, the Wisevoter advocacy group said in an analysis.

Moreover, the state's warm climate and challenges related to mental health and substance abuse compound the problem, the report said.

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Trump Vows to Hold Silicon Valley Tech Giants Accountable for Censorship

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said he will hold Silicon Valley Tech giants accountable for alleged censorship.

"We will make the Silicon Valley Tech tyrants answer for their illegal censorship," Trump said during the California Republican Party fall convention in Anaheim.

According to reports, in 2022, X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and Google were accused of inconsistent content moderation and censorship, sparking widespread concerns about freedom of speech and their impact on public discourse.

Trump was famously banned by social media sites over his comments during the Capitol riots in 2021.

In response, Trump introduced Truth Social, a social media platform committed to free expression without political ideology-based censorship.

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Oil Prices Up Nearly 30% in 3rd Quarter at Highest Level Since Start of Ukraine Conflict

NEW YORK, September 30 (Sputnik) - Crude prices fell on the last trading day of September on growing unease over how the world might cope in the coming months with increasing energy costs, but those betting on higher oil prices still won big on the month and quarter, helped largely by the Saudi and Russian production cuts.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for delivery in November settled at $90.79 per barrel, down 92 cents, or 1%, on the day.

While WTI fell on the day, it rose 0.8% on the week, resuming its rally from the end of August after a one-week hiatus last week. For the month, the US crude benchmark rose 8.5%.

The July-September period, when WTI rose 26.5%, also marked the best quarter for the US benchmark since the first three months of 2022. Then, WTI traded as high as $130 per barrel as Russia’s conflict with Ukraine opened the way for the West to impose sanctions on Moscow that began the long-running disruption in global commodity flows. Now, WTI is within striking range of triple-digit pricing again, reaching a 13-month high of $95.03 on September 28.

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London-traded Brent for the most-active December contract settled at $92.20 a barrel, down 90 cents, or 1%, on the day. The global crude benchmark rose 0.3% on the week, 6.8% on the month and 23% for the quarter. The global crude benchmark reached a ten-month high of $95.35 on September 28.

"After an amazing week, month and quarter, oil was ready for some profit-taking," Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said in a note to the company's clients. "Energy traders quickly realized this wasn't the time for oil to rally above the $100 a barrel level, so they are cautiously locking in some profits."

Oil prices have gained between $25 and $30 from the May lows of beneath $64 for WTI and $72 for Brent. The rally was largely in response to cumulative production cuts of at least 1.3 million barrels per day by Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Saudi Arabia, Russia and other oil producers associated with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) will meet again next week to review the impact of their production cuts on the market and what to do going forth.

Demand for US crude has, meanwhile, exploded internationally as it begins to fill some pockets underserved by the Saudi-Russian production cuts. That has led to a plunge in inventory levels at the Cushing, Oklahoma, hub that serves as a central delivery and storage point for US crude. This is especially so with the pick-up in shipments of a new US crude grade called WTI Midland - which is comparable to the viscosity of the heavier Arab and Russian oils versus the typically light-grade that's WTI.

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Co-Defendant in Trump Georgia Election Case Scott Hall Pleads Guilty

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - Scott Hall, one of the co-defendants in the Georgia election interference case involving former President Donald Trump, has entered a guilty plea during a hearing in Fulton County Superior Court.

Hall faces seven charges alleging he was part of a conspiracy, along with former President Trump, to overturn President Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election in Georgia. Scott is specifically accused of tampering with electronic voting machines in Coffee County.

Fulton County Judge Scott McAfee on Friday imposed 12-month probation for each count against him, effectively resulting in a five-year probation term, along with a $1,000 fine for each count, totaling $5,000.

In addition, McAfee ordered Scott not to participate in any activities regarding polling or the administration of elections.

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Price Cap on Russian Oil Not Working as Intended, Yellen Admits

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The G7 price cap on Russian oil has not been working as well as the West intended with Moscow's ability to create shadow services for its oil shipments and after the rally in crude prices that brought a barrel near $100, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told reporters.

"It does point to some reduction in the effectiveness of the price cap," Yellen told reporters in what appeared to be her first public comment acknowledging the West's shortfall on the matter, Yellen said as quoted by Bloomberg on Friday.

The price cap is one of the West's many inventions to curb Russia's participation in the international markets, in response to Moscow's role in the Ukraine conflict. The aim was to limit the revenue the country could earn from its oil without directly reducing its crude exports, which could harm world supply if disrupted.

Initially, the price cap worked, when crude itself traded at under $70 a barrel and Russia offered further discounts to buyers.

In recent months though, global crude prices benchmarked against London-based Brent began rallying sharply, reaching above $95 a barrel this week, as Russia and Saudi Arabia withheld a total of 1.3 million barrels from their regular daily production. Moscow had also found its own insurance, shipping and other services that established companies in the trade had been denied from providing to Russian oil by the G7.

Reports this week said that Indian oil buyers, the largest and most loyal customers of Russia since the Ukraine crisis broke, paid closer to $100 for a barrel for Russian crude.

"Russia has spent a great deal of money and time and effort to provide services for the export of its oil," Yellen said. "They have added to their shadow fleet, provided more insurance and that kind of trade is not prohibited by the price cap."

She pledged to find new ways to make the oil price cap work, saying "we are more than prepared to take action", without specifying what that might be.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) -

TERRORIST ATTACKS IN PAKISTAN

* An explosion occurred near a mosque in Mastung in Pakistan's Balochistan province, killing 52 people and wounding more than 50, according to local media reports on Friday.
* Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed condolences to the Pakistan leadership regarding for the victims of the terrorist attack in the Balochistan province.

US GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

* President Joe Biden would veto a US House bill to temporarily fund the federal government

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and avoid a shutdown to the inclusion of spending cuts and border security measures, the White House Office of Management and Budget said.
* National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the United States has enough appropriated funds to keep providing assistance to Ukraine in the coming weeks.
* US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said he will continue to pursue legislation in the lower chamber of Congress to temporarily fund the federal government and bolster border security, despite pushback from the White House and congressional Democrats on the eve of a government shutdown.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH
* The International Court of Justice said on Friday that Armenia filed a lawsuit against Azerbaijan for racial discrimination in Nagorno-Karabakh.
* More than 97,000 residents of Nagorno-Karabakh have moved to Armenia since September 24, Armenian cabinet spokesperson Nazeli Baghdasaryan said.
* Another meeting between the representatives of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan has started in Yevlakh, the state-run AZERTAC news agency reported.
* Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev said that 2,300 former internally displaced persons have returned to their homes in Karabakh and the number is expected to reach 5,500 by the end of the year.
* The possibility of extending the Russian peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh will be discussed with Azerbaijan, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* The Russian military has conducted nine strikes at targets in Ukraine using cruise missiles and drones this week, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Friday.
* A control center belonging to the Ukrainian Foreign Legion has been destroyed in the attacks, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* Ukraine has lost more than1,760 soldiers in the Donetsk direction from September 24-29, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

BRICS
* The expansion of BRICS indicates that the world is tired of US hegemony and imperialism, Nicaraguan Foreign Affairs Minister Denis Moncada told Sputnik.
* BRICS is not a military alliance, but rather a platform for developing positions based on sovereignty and mutual respect, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

KOSOVO AND METOHIA
* NATO will increase its presence near the Kosovo border with Serbia in response to recent tensions, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.
* The United States is monitoring a large and unprecedented Serbian military deployment near Kosovo and calls on Belgrade to withdraw its troops stationed near the border, Kirby said.
* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke over the telephone with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and discussed the need to take immediate steps to de-escalate tensions with

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Kosovo, the State Department said.

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Blinken, Vucic Discuss Measures to De-Escalate Tensions With Kosovo - US State Dept.

(Updates with more details, background in paras 3-7)
WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke over the telephone with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and discussed the need to take immediate steps to de-escalate tensions with Kosovo, the State Department said on Friday.
"Secretary Blinken and President Vucic discussed the importance of taking immediate measures to de-escalate tensions with Kosovo in the wake of the September 24 violence and death of a Kosovo police sergeant," the State Department said in a statement.
Blinken reiterated the necessity to bring those responsible for the attack on the Kosovo police to justice, the statement said.
The secretary of state said such events present unacceptable challenges to the international community and expressed full support for the KFOR and the EULEX missions.
Blinken urged Serbia to accompany immediate de-escalation with full implementation of its commitments under the normalization agreement within the EU-facilitated dialogue, added.
On Sunday, Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti said unidentified individuals opened fire on Kosovo police officers in the northern municipality of Zvecan, killing one and wounding another.
Vucic said that three Serbs were killed and two others injured in the clashes with police in northern Kosovo and Metohija. Vucic said that those killed were not terrorists but were driven to the brink of desperation by the Kosovar authorities in Pristina. Vucic called them "heroes and martyrs."

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Stepanov Says Still Waiting For Apology From Trudeau to Russian Canadian Community

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) -An apology to the Russian Canadian Community from Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the Russian Canadian Community is yet to be made over the honoring of a Nazi Veteran at Parliament, while the Canadian media is also yet to recognize the issue, Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov said in statement on Friday.
"#Ambassador Stepanov: "#Hunka-gate. Still waiting for the unreserved apology to the Russian Canadian Community from PM Trudeau's cabinet," Stepanov said in a Twitter post. " Hey, Canadian media! Are you going to recognize the problem?"
Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau offered a formal apology to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday for putting him in an awkward position. Zelenskyy was photographed pumping his fist in acknowledgment of former SS man Yaroslav Hunka who was

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saluted from the gallery as he was given a standing ovation by Canadian lawmakers.

Konstantin Gavrilov, Russia's chief arms control negotiator in Vienna, slammed Trudeau on Thursday for apologizing to everyone but the Russians, which he said was a further proof of revisionism in Canada that sought to downplay Russia's contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The 98-year-old former volunteer with the 14th Waffen SS Grenadier Division, a Nazi military unit declared a criminal organization during the Nuremberg trials in 1946, was invited to the Canadian parliament by Speaker Anthony Rota and lauded as a "hero" who fought against the Russians in World War Two. Rota resigned over the backlash that followed the exposure of Hunka's role in the notorious SS.

The honoring of a Nazi veteran prompted outcries from Russia and Poland, with senior officials suggesting Hunka should be extradited to face justice in the court of law. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted that Hunka's crimes had no statute of limitations.

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Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Will Run as Independent in 2024 Amid Democratic Roadblocks - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - Current Democratic 2024 presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. will announce next month that he is switching to an independent bid due to roadblocks imposed by the Democratic Party, Mediaite reported on Friday.

Kennedy believes that Democrats have changed their rules to exclude his candidacy, forcing an independent run, the report said, citing a campaign source.

Kennedy plans to announce his bid as an independent on October 9 during an event in Pennsylvania, the report said. Kennedy's campaign will launch ads targeting the Democratic National Committee ahead of the announcement, the report said.

Kennedy's positions on issues including the conflict in Ukraine and COVID-19 vaccines diverge from those of most Democratic politicians. In June, political analyst Keith Preston told Sputnik that the Democratic Party and partisan media would "pull out all stops" to ensure Kennedy's campaign fails.

Earlier this month, US media reported that Kennedy also met with Libertarian Party chair Angela McArdle in July. McCardle reportedly said that Kennedy emphasized his commitment to running as a Democrat at the time, but noted that he considers himself very libertarian.

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Blinken, Vucic Discuss Needed Measures to De-Escalate Tensions With Kosovo - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a phone call with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic discussed the need to take immediate steps to

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de-escalate tensions with Kosovo, the Department of State said on Friday.
"Secretary Blinken and President Vucic discussed the importance of taking immediate measures to de-escalate tensions with Kosovo in the wake of the September 24 violence and death of a Kosovo Police Sergeant," the statement said.

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Top US General Mark Milley Hands Over Command to Gen. Charles Brown During Ceremony

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, 65, has handed over his commanding powers to Gen. Charles Q. Brown, Jr. and retired during a formal ceremony at Joint Base Myer–Henderson in Arlington, Virginia.
In addition to senior military leaders, the ceremony was attended by President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.
"General Milley has a deep sense of history. And he knows that future generations would judge us harshly if we failed to defend the postwar order built by American leadership. So, he hasn't just studied history. He has made history," Austin said in his remarks during the ceremony.
Milley has served as the 20th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since October 1, 2019, after then-US President Donald Trump selected him to be the nation's highest-ranking military officer. Before becoming the US top general, Malley served as the 39th Chief of Staff of the US Army.

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US Has Funds To Continue Providing Kiev Aid For Coming Weeks: Kirby on Potential Shutdown

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council Coordinator John Kirby said on Friday commenting on a possible government shutdown that the United States has enough appropriated funds to keep providing assistance to Ukraine for the coming weeks.
"We have enough appropriated funds that have not been executed, have not been spend on aid to Ukraine, to get us through coming weeks ," Kirby said, adding that he cannot give the exact day when these resources would run out. "We do have some unspent funds that we can continue to work on past this weekend."

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Biden to Stay in Washington as Government Shutdown Looms - White House

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WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will remain in Washington and will liaise with congressional leaders as the deadline for passing a measure to fund the federal government looms, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Friday.

"I can say that the president's going to be in Washington and he's going to continue to remain in touch with congressional [leaders]," Jean-Pierre said.

The spokesperson said the White House team will continue to remain in touch with congressional leaders and lawmakers from both parties and Biden will receive updates on all developments.

Funding for the work of the federal government will expire on Sunday at midnight. Short of Congress passing a measure to continue funding by the set deadline, a government shutdown would be imminent.

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Western Price Cap Imposed on Russian Oil Not Going Away Anytime Soon - Kirby

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - The price cap imposed on Russian oil is not going away any time soon, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.

"We still believe that the price cap is a useful, viable tool and we already said at the beginning, that you know, we'd watch this and monitor it and, if needed, adjustments would be made. We will talk with our allies and partners about that," Kirby said during a press briefing. "So, [there is] no sense that the price cap as a tool is going to go away anytime soon."

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CORRECTION - Kirby Says NATO Will Increase Presence Near Kosovo Border With Serbia

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - NATO will increase its presence near the Kosovo border with Serbia in response to recent tensions, White House National Security Council Coordinator John Kirby said on Friday.

"The Kosovo peacekeeping force that NATO has on the ground is going to be increasing its presence of NATO forces in northern Kosovo, and the areas around the border to try to reassure residents and to continue to deliver on its mandate of providing a safe and secure environment," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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US Government Shutdown, Bankruptcy Threat Won't Slow Ukraine Spending Frenzy - Experts

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - US lawmakers will keep up reckless spending on aid for Ukraine even if it pushes the United States into bankruptcy, shuts down the government, and threatens to spark World War III, experts told Sputnik.

US Congress has until midnight to pass a funding measure through both chambers, lest the government begin to initiate a shutdown. The Senate is attempting to include more than $6 billion in aid for Ukraine as part of a temporary spending measure, which would give lawmakers until November 17 to pass further appropriations bills. However, some Republican lawmakers have expressed opposition to the inclusion of aid for Kiev.

The impasse comes just as the US national debt has risen to record levels, soaring past the $33 trillion mark last week. The US added $1 trillion to the debt since June, according to Congressman Dan Bishop.

"Well, if they allow Biden to commit to automatic payment of the money to run the Ukrainian government no matter what else is not being paid, as apparently is being set up, they can spin de facto support of the war together with a claim to fiscal austerity forever," former CIA station chief Philip Giraldi told Sputnik. "Both sides will take credit for sound government even as we are about to go bankrupt and start World War III simultaneously."

Independent Institute Center for Peace & Liberty Director Ivan Eland said reducing federal spending is important but forcing a government shutdown is ineffective and counterproductive.

Aid to Ukraine is one of the issues that the House Republicans are complaining about when refusing to allow a continuing resolution to approve spending to keep the government open, he noted.

"However, I think a majority of both parties still support aid to Ukraine, so it will eventually be passed. And there may not even be a gap in funding because already approved aid is still in the pipeline," Eland said.

Former State Department official James Carden said even if the government shuts down, US Congress will never learn its lesson.

"Sadly I don't think it will have much of an impact at all on the Ukraine spending frenzy," Carden concluded.

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US Monitoring Large Serbian Deployment Near Kosovo, Urges Serbia to Withdraw - Kirby

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - The United States is monitoring a large and "unprecedented" Serbian military deployment near Kosovo and calls on Belgrade to withdraw its troops stationed near the border, US National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communication John Kirby said on Friday.

"We're going to be monitoring or we are monitoring a large Serbian military deployment along the border with Kosovo. That includes an unprecedented staging of advanced Serbian artillery and mechanized infantry units. We believe that this is a very destabilizing development," Kirby

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told a briefing.
Kirby also called on Serbia to remove their troops from the border.

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Kirby Says NATO Will Increase Presence Near Kosovo Border With Syria

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - NATO will increase its presence near the Kosovo border with Syria in response to recent tensions, White House National Security Council Coordinator John Kirby said on Friday.
"The Kosovo peacekeeping force that NATO has on the ground is going to be increasing its presence of NATO forces in northern Kosovo, and the areas around the border to try to reassure residents and to continue to deliver on its mandate of providing a safe and secure environment," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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White House's Sullivan Says Walking Away From Ukraine Would Hurt US Credibility

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) – If the United States walks away from Ukraine at this pivotal moment on the battlefield with Russia, it would deliver a blow to Washington's credibility, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Friday.
"Walking away from Ukraine would be a hit to our credibility," Sullivan said during a conversation hosted by The Atlantic magazine. "The notion that the United States would stop funding Ukraine at this pivotal moment goes against every national interest of our country."

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US House Rejects GOP-Led Government Funding, Border Security Bill Ahead of Shutdown

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Friday rejected Republican-led legislation to temporarily fund the federal government and avoid a shutdown, as well as to bolster the United States' border security.
House lawmakers rejected the legislation, dubbed the Spending Reduction and Border Security Act, in a vote of 198 in favor and 232 opposed.
Government funding expires on October 1, which is when the shutdown could start.
The bill would have funded the government through October 31 in an effort to give Congress

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more time to pass standard appropriations bills. However, US President Joe Biden would veto the bill if it were to make it to his desk, the White House said earlier on Friday.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has urged the House to take up the upper chamber's short-term funding bill, which also includes more than $6 billion in aid for Ukraine. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has said that he does not see the votes in the lower chamber to pass the Senate legislation.

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Blinken Says Responsible for Killing Sikh Activist in Canada Must be Held Accountable

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday that those responsible for the killing of a Sikh independence activist in Canada should be held accountable.

"Those responsible need to be held accountable and we hope that our friends in both Canada and India will work together to resolve this matter," Blinken said during a press conference.

Last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada was examining "credible allegations" potentially linking Indian officials to the June 18 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar by two masked gunmen in Surrey, British Columbia. The prominent separatist leader campaigned for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India called Khalistan.

On Wednesday, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said that New Delhi requested that Canada share any information it has that allegedly ties the government to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

The White House previously said it is coordinating and consulting with Canada closely on Ottawa's accusation about Nijjar's killing.

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State Dept. to Take Steps to Protect National Security Should Shutdown Happen- Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) – The State Department is taking measures to carry out its functions to protect national security should a government shutdown happen, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"The shutdown should not happen, but if it does, we will take every possible step to make sure that, at the very least, we carry out our functions to protect national security," Blinken told reporters.

The US Congress is working to fund the federal government before the end of the week to avoid a shutdown. The House of Representatives' proposal funds the government through October 31. The Senate is also considering a short-term government funding bill that extends

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through November 17, as well as provides more than $6 billion in aid for Ukraine.
Blinken admitted that a possible shutdown would clearly affect the State Department and make it harder to execute its key functions. He urged Congress to avoid such a scenario.

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Migration Problem Does Not Begin on US-Mexico Border, But in South – Top Diplomat Barcena

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) – The problem of migration in Latin America does not begin on the US-Mexico border, but originates in the countries to the south of Mexico, Foreign Secretary Alicia Barcena said on Friday.
"[T]he problem on our border, the US-Mexico border, it doesn't begin there really. People are coming from the south. So, we need to have a hemispheric regional perspective to include Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica," Barcena said during a joint press conference following the conclusion of the U.S.-Mexico High-Level Economic Dialogue meeting at the Department of State.
During the meeting, Mexico and the United States agreed to look at the structural causes of the migration problem as it has strong social and economic roots, Barcena said.
Barcena added that she had a chance to meet with US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, Homeland Security Presidential Advisor Dr. Liz Sherwood-Randall, and a few representatives from the listed countries to discuss joint actions to control migratory flows, offer development opportunities, and approve safe and legal pathways for migration.
Governments of South and Central American countries have recently reported a growing migration crisis their public services are facing, with thousands of people heading to North America every day via Colombia, Panama, and Costa Rica, putting a serious strain on the small towns and villages on the way to the United States. The Costa Rican authorities declared a national emergency in light of the migration influx.

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Michigan Judge Rules Teen Shooter Ethan Crumbley Eligible for Life Sentence Without Parole

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - Oakland County Judge Kwame Rowe on Friday declared that the 17-year-old school shooter Ethan Crumbley is eligible for a sentence of life in prison without parole.
Crumbley killed four and injured six people in Oxford Township outside of Detroit on November 2021. He pleaded guilty to 24 charges, including one count of terrorism causing death and four counts of first-degree murder.
"The court... finds that the prosecution has rebutted the presumption by clear and convincing

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evidence that a sentence to life without parole is a disproportionate sentence," Judge Rowe said during the hearing.

According to a 2012 US Supreme Court ruling, courts in the United States must consider the maturity level of juvenile offenders before imposing life sentences without parole.

"The evidence does not demonstrate to this court that he [Crumbley] wants to change," Rowe added.

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UN Mission to Nagorno-Karabakh First in 30 Years, Important to Get In - UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, September 29 (Sputnik) - The United Nations-led mission to the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh will be the first in 30 years and it is crucial to get onto the ground, the UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"We have not had access there in about 30 years," Dujarric told a briefing. "So it's very important that we will be able to get in."

The United Nations team will go in through the air from Azerbaijan while there the team will seek to assess the situation on the ground, he added.

The government of Azerbaijan and the United Nation have agreed on a mission to the region. The mission will take place over the weekend and it will be a team of about 10 members.

As of Friday, over 84,000 of Nagorno-Karabakh's 120,000 population have fled to Armenia, according to Armenia's cabinet spokeswoman Nazeli Baghdasaryan. Amid the displacement, a massive explosion hit a gas station near Nagorno-Karabakh's capital of Stepanakert on Monday. With 68 people already confirmed dead, the death toll is still being calculated as numerous bodies are hard to identify and multiple victims are in the hospital with critical injuries.

Nagorno-Karabakh, which announced its secession from the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic 35 years ago and, after an armed conflict with Azerbaijan from 1992 to 1994, existed for many years as an unrecognized republic, has said it will cease to exist from January 1, 2024.

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US Energy Dept. Considers Providing $1Bln Loan to Lithium Americas Corporation - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - The US Energy Department is considering a $1 billion loan to mineral developer Lithium Americas Corporation in a bid to bolster the United States' critical mineral supply chain, Bloomberg reported on Friday.

Lithium Americas is in talks with the Energy Department about a loan that could cover more than half of a mining operation at Thacker Pass in the US state of Nevada, the report said, citing a source familiar with the matter.

The deal would mark the largest loan ever awarded to a mining company through the Energy

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Department's Loan Programs Office, with the outlay potentially exceeding $1 billion, the report said.

The Thacker Pass mine project is seen as a chance to bolster the United States' supply of lithium, which is used in batteries and solar panels, among other applications, the report added.

Lithium Americas' stock price rose by up to 9.5% on Friday amid reports of the potential loan. The Canada-based company describes the Thacker Pass site as the "largest known and measured" lithium deposit in the United States.

Some environmentalists and tribal groups have criticized the development of the site and unsuccessfully challenged it in court, claiming that it could harm surrounding areas.

The Biden administration has claimed to be attempting to balance environmental concerns with the demand for raw materials created by the transition to clean energy.

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US Condemns China's Life Sentence of Uyghur Professor – State Department

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) – The US Department of State condemned on Friday the Chinese government for reportedly giving a life sentence to Uyghur folklore professor Rahile Dawut, according to a release on Friday.

"We condemn the reported life sentence handed down by the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) following secret court proceedings of Professor Rahile Dawut, an anthropologist and expert on Uyghur folklore and traditions," the release stated.

It noted that Uyghur intellectuals had been imprisoned for their work to protect and preserve Uyghur culture and traditions, and declared Dawut's life sentence "part of an apparent broader effort by the PRC to eradicate Uyghur identity and culture and undermine academic freedom, including through the use of detentions and disappearances."

The Department of State called on the Chinese government to release Dawut and end crimes of humanity against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in China.

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Federal Reserve Favorite Inflation Gauge Slows in August, Raising Hopes for Hold on Rates

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - The Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) Index, a US inflation indicator closely followed by the Federal Reserve, rose just below Wall Street's expectations to 0.4% last month and is raising hopes that the central bank will not raise interest rates in November.

The Fed left rates unchanged on September 20, having added a quarter point in July. However, the Fed maintained projections of a possible quarter point increase in November and/or December. The central bank has hiked rates 11 times since March 2022, adding 5.25

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percentage points to a prior base of 0.25%.

For August, the PCE Index rose 0.4% versus the July growth of 0.2%, data from the Commerce Department showed.

In a so-called core reading of the index - stripped of volatile food and energy prices - the PCE rose by 0.1% from a prior growth of 0.2%. Wall Street economists polled by US media said they expected a 0.5% growth in the broader PCE Index and 0.2% for the core reading.

Headline inflation growth, as suggested by a combination of the readings, was 3.5% year-on-year in August, as per expectations. Yet, the softer-than-expected readings on the month has assuaged economists who thought it gave the Fed another reason to withhold an interest rate hike in November.

The selloff in US bonds also eased for a second-day in a row on expectations of a November hold.

"The inflation numbers are on the low side of expectations and that should take the pressure off bonds," economist Adam Button wrote on the Forex Live platform.

Despite the August decline in price pressures, headline inflation as indicated by both the PCE and the broader Consumer Price Index (CPI) remain well above the Fed target. The CPI expanded at 3.7% in the year to August, versus the Fed's 2%-per year target.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said after this month's rate hike pause that the central bank was committed to getting inflation back at or under its 2% target and would raise rates accordingly to achieve that goal.

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Top House Foreign Affairs Democrat Asks State Department to Pause Some Egypt Aid

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) – US House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Gregory Meeks said Friday that he had asked the State Department to pause a portion of military financing to Egypt because of human rights concerns.

"Today, I requested the @StateDept pause a portion of US military financing to Egypt that is conditioned on human rights criteria," Meeks said in a statement on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. "Congress needs more clarity from @StateDept on how concerns about treatment of political prisoners, journalists, as well as the rule of law are being tackled in our bilateral relationship."

He added that he had called on Secretary of State Antony Blinken last month to "withhold the $320 million in military financing conditioned on human rights, but only $85 million was withheld."

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Lawmakers Lambast Biden Administration Over Disgusting Military Barracks - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - A group of lawmakers wrote a letter this week to a top US Defense official after a recent report exposed that military service members are living in inadequate conditions, Fox News reported on Friday.

"On a daily basis, these brave men and women put their lives on the line defending our freedoms; the least we can do is provide them adequate housing," Representative Mark Alford, a Republican from Montana is quoted as saying in the report.

Calling the released information "deeply disturbing," Alford and several other lawmakers drafted a letter to Brendan Owens, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment demanding answers after reading a report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) detailed the horrid living conditions faced by service members across the country, the report said.

According to the news report, the GAO release included several disturbing pictures of military barracks rooms and buildings from 12 anonymous military installations and detailed how many of the troops who live there are forced to deal with issues such as overflowing sewage, water damage, mold, and pests.

Many of the troops interviewed for the GAO release also complained about inadequate climate control, broken windows, and unsafe drinking water, the report added.

According to the report, the Defense Department has not undertaken sufficient plans for improving these conditions, leaving the service members to handle them on their own.

The letter to Owens, which was also signed by Reps. Matt Gaetz, James Moylan, Rich McCormick, and Don Davis, draws attention the the Defense Department's failings and the fact that forcing American troops to live in these conditions is "completely unacceptable," the report added. It also requests that the DOD provide a response on what steps it is currently taking to address the issues.

"The Department of Defense must rectify these problems and I will continue to hold them accountable," Alford said in the report.

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New York Governor Declares State of Emergency Due to Heavy Rainfall - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - New York Governor Kathy Hochul on Friday announced a state of emergency for New York City, Hudson Valley and Long Island due to the heavy rainfall in these areas that is expected to continue.

"I am declaring a state of emergency in New York City, the Hudson Valley and Long Island in response to the significant, dangerous rainfall that is currently impacting the region and is expected to continue for the next 20 hours," Hochul said in a statement.

According to the National Weather Service, the low pressure near the mid-Atlantic coast is expected to move north toward Long Island and then east, potentially causing flash floods in streams and larger rivers.

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The New York State authorities dispatched numerous personnel prior to the storm and instructed all state agencies to offer essential resources to handle the severe weather, the statement said.

"It is critical that all New Yorkers take all necessary precautions and avoid flooded roads, which are some of the most dangerous places during flash floods," the statement added.

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India Seeks to Improve UN Security Council's Lack of Asian Representation - Jaishankar

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - India seeks to improve international institutions, including the United Nations, given that they lack credibility due to the near absence of Asian representation in the UN Security Council, Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said on Friday.

"The United Nations obviously lacks credibility and to a large degree effectiveness as well," Jaishankar said in an address at the Hudson Institute.

Jaishankar explained that much of what India seeks to do is to improve and "refresh institutions" to make them more fit for purpose, here including the United Nations.

"We do believe today that, you know, the United Nations, where the most populous country is not in the Security Council, when the fifth largest economy is not there, when a continent of 50 plus countries is not there," he said.

Jaishankar pointed out that today's world architecture is largely based on a Western construct, which does not take into account that the largest economies of the 1950s are not the same anymore - a reality illustrated well by the G20 group of nations.

The minster emphasized that India does not consider itself an anti-Western state in its efforts to seek improving international institutions, here including financial ones.

"I make this very important distinction where India is concerned: India is non Western; India is not anti-Western," Jaishankar said.

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India-Russia Relations Have Not Seen Same Ups, Downs as With US or China - Jaishankar

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - Ties between Russia and India have been rather stable and have not seen the ups and downs typical of relationships between major powers, Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said on Friday.

"If you consider international relations over the last seventy years, you know, the US-Russian relations, the China-Russia relations, the US-China relations, Europe. Pretty much every big relationship in the last seventy years has seen a great deal of volatility. You had sharp ups and downs. The India-Russia is very exceptional, it's been very steady," Jaishankar said during a

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conversation at the Hudson Institute.

Jaishankar said that since the 1950s, there has been a constant and mutual cultivation of bilateral relations with the Soviet Union, then with Russia. He added that the way in which New Delhi and Moscow think of each other is based on the same principles and logic.

The minister added that although the relationship between Moscow and New Delhi may not be "spectacular" and may have plateaued, it has not seen the same variations Russia has had with China, Europe, or the US.

"That's in itself a statement", he stressed.

The minister pointed out that in many ways, Moscow's relationship with the Collective West has been shattered since the onset of the special military operation in Ukraine, adding that it would be normal for Russia to now focus on Asia.

"Much of that will naturally focus on China ... but then again, India will and has come into calculations as well," Jaishankar said.

He expressed belief that Russia would consciously shift its attention to the non-Western world.

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UAW Union to Expand Auto Workers Strike at Ford, GM at Noon Friday - President

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - United Auto Workers (UAW) President Shawn Fain announced on Friday that auto workers will expand their ongoing strike at noon to include the automakers Ford and General Motors (GM).

"[W]e will expand our strike to these two companies. To be clear, negotiations haven't broken-down. We're still talking with all three companies," Fain said.

The affected facilities include GM's Lansing Delta Township Assembly factory in the state of Michigan and Ford's Chicago assembly plant in the state of Illinois.

Earlier this month, some 19,000 auto workers in numerous facilities owned by Ford, GM and Stellantis went on strike.

The auto workers decided to go on a strike because of the breakdown in negotiations held to achieve an increase in wages and decrease in the working hours.

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Canada Very Permissive Toward Extremists, Provides Operating Space - India's Top Diplomat

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - Canada has adopted a very permissive attitude toward harboring extremists and offers them operating space, India's Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said on Friday.

The remarks addressed public accusations made by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau against India over its alleged involvement in the murder of a Sikh separatist leader in the

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province of British Columbia.

"This has been an issue of great friction for many years with Canada ... but in the last two years it has come back very much into play, because of what we consider to be a very permissive Canadian attitude towards terrorist, extremist people who openly advocate violence, and they have been given operating space in Canada because of the compulsions of Canadian politics," Jaishankar said at the Hudson Institute.

Jaishankar said the Indian government had conveyed both privately and publicly to Trudeau that the accusations were inconsistent with New Delhi's policy and that if the Canadian government had specific information, India was open to examine it.

The minister further added that from India's perspective, Canada has become a country in which Indian organized crime, along with people trafficking, secessionism, violence and terrorism, a set of "very toxic combination," have found an operating space.

Last week, Trudeau announced that Canada was examining "credible allegations" potentially linking Indian officials to the June 18 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar by two masked gunmen in Surrey, British Columbia. The prominent separatist leader campaigned for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India called Khalistan.

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McCarthy Defends US House Govt. Funding Bill Despite Democrats Pushback Ahead of Shutdown

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said on Friday that he will continue to pursue legislation in the lower chamber of Congress to temporarily fund the federal government and bolster border security, despite pushback from the White House and congressional Democrats on the eve of a government shutdown.

"Later today we'll vote on a stopgap to keep the government open and secure our border," McCarthy said during a press conference. "We hope Democrats will join with us. I hope Democrats don't vote to shut the government down."

Earlier on Friday, the White House released a statement on the Biden administration policy opposing the House bill. President Joe Biden would veto the legislation if it reached his desk, the statement said.

US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has also criticized the House legislation and urged McCarthy to take up the Senate's short-term government funding measure, which includes more than $6 billion in aid for Ukraine. The upper chamber's bill is also backed by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

However, McCarthy has said that he does not see the votes for the Senate bill in the House of Representatives, where some Republican lawmakers have opposed the inclusion of Ukraine aid in a government funding bill.

Congress has until the end of the week to pass a funding measure through both chambers, lest the government begin to initiate a shutdown.

McCarthy dismissed a question on whether the vote on the House bill today is a "last chance"

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to avoid a shutdown, retorting that he is not known to quit after initial failures.

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Share of Americans Rating Economy as 'Poor' Climbs to 48%, Highest This Year - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - As many as 48% of Americans assess the state of the US economy as "poor," which is the highest percentage recorded this year, according to a Gallup poll published on Friday.

"In this month's update, 20% of U.S. adults say economic conditions are 'excellent' or 'good,' while 32% call them 'only fair' and 48% 'poor.' The overall positive rating is down slightly from 23% in August, while the poor rating is up from 42% and is the highest Gallup has seen in a year," the pollster said.

The number of those thinking economic conditions are worsening has increased to 73%, up from the 66 to 67% who shared this opinion over the summer months.

Only 24% believe the situation is improving.

The poll results come amid the risk of a US government shutdown after September 30 due to disagreements between the Democrat-majority Senate and the Republican-majority House of Representatives.

Gallup conducted the poll from September 1-23 among 1,016 adults from all 50 US states and the District of Columbia.

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Biden Declares Late US Senator Dianne Feinstein 'True Trailblazer' - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden on Friday declared the late US Senator Dianne Feinstein a "true trailblazer" upon hearing the news of her passing.

"Senator Dianne Feinstein was a pioneering American. A true trailblazer. And for Jill and me, a cherished friend," Biden said in a release.

Biden noted that he served together with Feinstein in the US Senate for more than 15 years and praised her "skillful legislating and sheer force of will" exemplified in Feinstein leading the efforts to ban so-called assault weapons.

"[Feinstein] made her mark on everything from national security to the environment to protecting civil liberties," Biden said in the release.

The president also said in the release that Feinstein had an immense impact on younger female leaders.

Feinstein, who served as US senator from California since 1992, died in her home in Washington on Thursday, according to her chief of staff.

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US Senators Introduce Resolution for Evan Gershkovich's Immediate Release From Russia

WASHINGTON, September 29 (Sputnik) - A bipartisan group of 27 US Senators on Friday introduced a resolution calling for the immediate release of US journalist Evan Gershkovich from Russia, where he is detained for espionage.

"Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the Senate calls on the government of the Russian Federation to immediately release Evan Gershkovich, who has been wrongfully detained since March 2023," the resolution said.

The senators called on the Russian government to provide "full, unfettered and consistent" consular access to the detained journalist.

In addition, the resolution urges President Joe Biden and other US officials to use every opportunity to press for Gershkovich's immediate release.

On March 29, the Russian authorities arrested Gershkovich in Yekaterinburg for trying collect classified defense information for the United States. If found guilty, Gershkovich could face a prison sentence of up to 20 years.

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